

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT CONSULTATION (WORKSHOP) ON “RESEARCH NEEDS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE TRANSFORMATION TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS AT EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL LEVELS”

BACKGROUND

Anthropic activity has profoundly changed the functions of our planet's biological and physical processes and it is increasingly evident that well-being and development are closely linked to the availability of natural resources, to the services offered by ecosystems and the Earth's resilience. In this context, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (SDGs) provide an important framework to ensure that policies are informed by scientific knowledge and that they are directing government strategies towards a new development paradigm focused on the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources of our planet and the well-being of future, as well as current, generations.

In this context, we need a detailed understanding of food systems, linkages and interdependencies among their components (e.g. agricultural production, processing, distribution, marketing and consumption of food, as well as management of food residues) in their wider (ecological, social, institutional) contexts. This is needed in order to better analyse and understand numerous challenges, interactions and trade-offs to be considered for securing global food and nutrition security. A wide array of challenges comes alongside the food systems, such as growing aggregate food demand, dietary shifts, access to technologies, and barriers to growth. External to food systems, other global challenges like the aggravating geopolitical instability, climate crisis and depleting stocks of non-renewable resources, profoundly affect food systems

A sustainable food system is defined as “a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised” (HLPE, 2014). The development of Sustainable Food Systems represents a global challenge that fosters the development of rural populations, innovative agri-food chains based on sustainable production, the integration of agricultural and environmental, health and nutrition policies, and the promotion of sustainable diets. Especially the latter were defined univocally in 2010 by the FAO as “Those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources” (FAO, 2010). The promotion of such diets, as well as changing food environments by making the healthy choice the easy, sustainable, attractive and affordable choice, represents an important step towards achieving sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

Sustainable Food Systems are also necessary to reach the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN, 2022) and they are a cornerstone for the transition to a ‘Sustainable Europe by 2030’, as expressed by the European Commission through the Green Deal Initiative (2019). The achievement of these goals is a major task within the EU Partnership ‘Sustainable Food Systems for people, planet and climate’ launched by the Horizon Europe R&I work programme 2023-24. The Partnership will play a key role in enabling the European Green Deal (EC, 2021a), the Farm to Fork (EC, 2021b), the Biodiversity (EC, 2022b) and

Bioeconomy (EC, 2022d) Strategies, and Food2030 R&I ambitions towards ‘climate & sustainability’, ‘nutrition & health’, ‘circularity & resource efficiency’, and ‘innovation & communities’. Furthermore, strengthening international cooperation on sustainable food systems will also feed developing policies linked to Agroecology and the One Health approach.

Since Food Systems are interconnected regionally and globally through supply chains and international trade, and decisions in one region can impact others, R&I cannot be implemented within a European perspective only. Therefore, the future European Partnership for a Sustainable Future of Food Systems (**FutureFoodS**) will have to seek **international cooperation** to reach co-benefits while avoiding trade-offs.

APPROACH

A successful international cooperation in food systems R&I requires:

- Strengthening the dialogue among different countries and regions, organisations and stakeholders promoting international knowledge exchange and cooperation on sustainable food systems and international mobility programmes;
- Strengthening the current landscape of science–policy–society interfaces to engage a wider range of voices, integrate data, anticipate trends, identify unintended consequences and set targets and standards;
- Sharing knowledge on the mutual dependencies of food systems, through identification and analysis of relevant supply and value chains and their impact, and exchange of best practices;
- Using sustainable diets as a lever for bridging consumption and production in a sustainable way and to enhance international cooperation of food systems;
- Exchanging nature-based solutions to strengthen the resilience of countries impacted by the transformation of food systems at European and global scales, as well as by climate change;
- Bringing together SCP food initiatives and developing partnerships to build synergies and cooperation to leverage resources, fostering capacity building and enabling conditions for the identification, prioritization, development of SCP transformative actions;
- Sharing methodologies for the assessment of the overall performance of food systems, by explicitly integrating demand and supply side changes with a focus also on food environments. Increasing sustainability by valorising side-streams and closing material and energy loops towards increasing food system circularities
- Study designs to integrate all kind of land uses, in order to identify trade-offs and synergies when setting action to address the challenges of changing diets and food preferences, sustainable transformation of farming systems, closing material and energy loops, while efficiently dealing with climate change and geopolitical risks.
- Enhancing RDI funding for the novel solutions.

OUTLINE OF THE WORKSHOP

Objective of the workshop

Relying on the advanced knowledge on international research and on food systems, the ARCH, Bioeconomy and Food Systems Strategic Working Groups (SWG) of SCAR is organizing an **International Expert Consultation (workshop)** on the issue of SFS. The aim is to identify major and priority research questions that shall be addressed in the short, medium and long terms and to support the delineation of urgently needed measures for successful policy development and implementation towards a Sustainable Global Food System. International cooperation should be considered while tackling the challenge of global interdependencies of food systems.

Workshop outcomes:

- List of priority research themes for international cooperation, highlighting scale and scope of actions, methodologies and actors required;
- Creation of a better understanding of the skills, knowledge and evidence gaps currently holding back action to transform food systems at different scale, and consequently to kick start the list of priority research themes;
- Fostering attention to the international aspects that are already included in the SRIA of the FutureFoodS partnership (in particular by contributing to WP 8)
- Reflection (or Position) paper
- List of actors and networks to be taken into account and contacted by the partnership.

Setting: Virtual meeting

Date and duration: 3 half days (morning sessions CET), 23 January – 25 January 2024

Participation: on invitation only (European and non-European researchers, regional and sub-regional research fora, as for example CIHEAM, PRIMA, UFM, CGIAR, FAO, FARA, ASARECA, CORAF, IICA, WFP, WHO and others organisations, SCAR ARCH, SCAR BSW and SCAR FS members, 40-50 participants max.)

Program:

- Day 1 - keynotes, objectives of the workshop, introduction to group work;
- Day 2 - group work, presentation of group results in plenary;
- Day 3 – group work, presentation and panel discussion of results

ABBREVIATIONS:

ASARECA: The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa

CGIAR: Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

CIHEAM: International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

CORAF: West and Central Africa for Agricultural Research and Development

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

FARA: Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa

IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

PRIMA: Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean region.

RDJ: Research Development and Innovation

SCAR: Standing Committee on Agricultural Research

SCAR ARCH SWG: SCAR European **A**gricultural **R**esearch towards greater impact on global **Ch**allenges Strategic Working Group

SCAR BSW: SCAR Bioeconomy Strategic Working Group

SCAR FS SWG: SCAR Food Systems Strategic Working Group

SCP: Sustainable Consumption and Production

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SFS: Sustainable Food System

UFM: Union for the Mediterranean

BIBLIOGRAFY:

EC (2021a) Green Deal: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

EC (2021b) Farm to Fork Strategy: https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en

EC (2022b.) European Biodiversity Strategy: https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

EC (2022d.) European Bioeconomy strategy: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/research-area/environment/bioeconomy/bioeconomy-strategy_en

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<https://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>

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